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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 THE HAGUE 000235

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/27/2015

TAGS: [MARR](#) [MOPS](#) [PREL](#) [AF](#) [NL](#)

SUBJECT: DUTCH ISAF AND OEF DEPLOYMENTS

REF: A. STATE 2743

[1](#)B. 04 THE HAGUE 3360

[1](#)C. THE HAGUE 99 (NOTAL)

Classified By: CLASSIFIED BY POLITICAL COUNSELOR ANDREW SCHOFER FOR REASONS 1.4 (B AND D)

[1](#)1. (S) Summary: PolMilOff met with MFA and MOD officials on January 26 and 28 to discuss the current status of Dutch commitments to NATO's ISAF mission and Operation Enduring Freedom. The GONL is not contemplating use of its contingent in NRF IV in support of the parliamentary elections in Afghanistan but is prepared to support the deployment of NATO's SRF (to which the Dutch have contributed a marine battalion) for this purpose. The GONL is planning on deploying F-16s to Afghanistan to provide air cover for ISAF following the departure of its Apache helicopters at the end of March. The GONL is seriously considering leading a second PRT for ISAF Stage III, though MFA and MOD differ on the timing. Concerning OEF, preparations continue for a possible Dutch SOF deployment; a recce team is currently visiting Afghanistan to refine the Dutch concept of operations. The Dutch are also considering taking over leadership of CTF-150 with three ships in December 2005. End Summary.

ISAF

[1](#)2. (C) PolMilOff met with MFA Security Policy Bureau Deputy Director for Operations Joop Nijssen on January 26 and MOD Senior Policy Advisor for Afghanistan Maarten van Meurs on January 28. Concerning support for upcoming elections as noted ref A, both said the GONL is not contemplating deployment of its land contingent in NRF IV (approximately 4,000 troops). Van Meurs said Defense Minister Kamp was strongly opposed to such a use of the NRF and that for once, the Netherlands agreed with France that the NRF was meant for crisis situations not anticipated events such as elections. For election support the MOD felt there should be "a proper force generation process." (Note: MFA Political Director Hugo Siblesz recently made the same argument to Ambassador Sobel.) According to van Meurs, one of the reasons the Netherlands agreed to make available a battalion of Dutch marines for the SRF for possible use in Afghanistan was to signal its preference for the SRF, rather than the NRF, playing this role. Van Meurs was confident that an SRF deployment to Afghanistan would not pose any political problems for the GONL. Nijssen similarly stated that the idea of using the Dutch NRF contingent in Afghanistan was simply "not being contemplated" in Dutch government circles. He noted that the possibility of sending Dutch troops to Afghanistan with SRF, on the other hand, had been mentioned in a government letter to parliament (note: an essential first step in the government's decision-making on a deployment).

[1](#)3. (C) Both Nijssen and van Meurs confirmed that the current Dutch Apache helicopter deployment will conclude at the end of March. The GONL is considering deployment of F-16s to provide air cover for ISAF and Dutch recce team recently returned from Afghanistan. Van Meurs said the F-16s would likely be deployed to Bagram and that the GONL was hoping to involve other European Participating Air Forces (EPAF) countries such as Belgium, Denmark, Norway and Portugal in the mission. He expected the Dutch F-16 deployment would reach initial operating capacity at the beginning of April with at least a few aircraft (less than six).

[1](#)4. (C) Concerning future Dutch PRTs, Nijssen said the MFA's preference would be to partner in a Stage III PRT with Canada and noted the two MODs were exploring this possibility. The MFA would like to see such a PRT operational by October. In a January 21 meeting with PolCouns and PolMilOff, Nijssen's boss, MFA Security Policy Director-General Maurits Jochems said that FM Bot and DefMin Kamp had agreed that the Netherlands should assume leadership of a second PRT at the end of 2005/beginning of 2006. Van Meurs said the MOD was not looking at Dutch leadership of a second PRT before Spring [1](#)2006.

OEF

[1](#)5. (S) Both Nijssen and van Meurs confirmed that preparations

for a possible Dutch special operations forces (SOF) in support of OEF continue on course (ref B). Following recent discussions at CENTCOM by MOD Operations Director Air Commodore Pieter Cobelens and officials, a Dutch MOD recce team departed January 24 for Kandahar and Helmand and is expected to return on February 1. As outlined ref B, the government will not use its normal approval process for military deployments with this mission. Once the recce team returns, the Core Group of the Dutch Cabinet (PM, FM, DefMin, two Deputy PMs) will take a final decision on the operation in February. It will then be briefed to political party leaders in closed-door session. Nijssen advised that coalition party leaders were sounded out on the mission last Fall and were supportive. The rest of the cabinet and parliament will be made aware of the mission in general terms. Nijssen said the Dutch expect to reach initial operating capacity by the end of April with full operations in May. Nijssen and van Meurs said the Dutch are also contemplating taking over leadership of CTF-150 from the French with three vessels, including one of the Dutch Navy's new LCF frigates, at the end of 2005 for a period of four months.

COMMENT

16. (S) While preparations for deploying SOF for OEF are apparently on track, the final hurdles of a full Cabinet decision and the briefing of parliamentary leaders still must be overcome before the deployment can proceed. With regard to the NRF/SRF question, it is worth noting that during the recent debate on possibly extending the Dutch troop presence in Al-Muthanna, DefMin Kamp cited the Dutch commitment to the NRF to argue successfully against an extension (ref C). Assuming Dutch opposition to using the NRF in Afghanistan stands firm, some may question whether the touting of their SRF commitment is intended, at least in part, to avoid deploying the much larger Dutch NRF contribution to a potentially dangerous environment in Afghanistan.
SOBEL